

At a ceremony in Arlington Heights monday, I presented Lake Bluff resident James Kinzer with several medals that he earned for his service during World War II. After contacting my office, Mr. Kinzer learned that he was eligible for medals that he never received, including the Distinguished Flying Cross, the Air Medal with three oak leaves, the American Campaign Medal, the European African Middle Eastern Campaign Medal with three bronze stars, and the WWII Victory Medal.

James Kinzer joined the Army Air Corps in February 1944 and was trained as a B-17 navigator. Mr. Kinzer flew with the 8th Air Force 384th Bomb Group out of Grafton Underwood England where he served as a first lieutenant.

Mr. Kinzer flew 31 missions during World War II - 15 over France in support of the Normandy operation, 15 in Germany (three in Berlin) and one mission to Poland, bombing a factory which produced the German Messerschmitt fighter airplanes.

Mr. Kinzer was inspired to join the Army Air Corps when he saw a photograph of a navigator in Life magazine. He was a student at Penn State at the time. He entered active duty on February 4, 1944, and trained in gunnery and navigation in Peyote, Texas, at the Rattlesnake Army Airfield. He flew to England in March of 1944 during a storm. Five planes and crews were lost during the trip due to the weather.

During the Normandy operation, Mr. Kinzer commented that you could see B-17's all the way back to England from France.

The crews would have breakfast (fresh eggs and bacon) at 3 a.m. the day of a mission. At 3:30 a.m. the intelligence briefing would start when a curtain was opened, revealing a map of the mission. The crews would be briefed on air defenses as well as the difficulties of ground support. An easy mission was referred to as a "milk run," but more often a groan would go through the assembled airmen who knew that the missions were heavily defended. Time was passed playing poker, bridge, and seeing an occasional movie. Kinzer had a leave for the weekend to London only to witness nightly V-2 rocket attacks on the city.

Mr. Kinzer's 31 missions qualified him to come back to the U.S. in September of 1944. He served the remaining part of the war with the Air Transport Command, moving airplanes around

the globe in a non-combat capacity.

Following his service, Mr. Kinzer became a patent attorney. He lives in Lake Bluff, has five children and seven grandchildren.

Mr. Kinzer's story is one of many that exist in the 10th Congressional District. If you are a veteran, or are a family member of one, I encourage you to contact my office at 847-940-0202 regarding potential medal requests, or any questions about services offered through the Department of Veterans Affairs.



Congressman Kirk and James Kinzer



World War II Congressman Mark Kirk presented James Kinzer with the Distinguished Flying Cross for his service